

My World 2015 and mobiles

In a ground-breaking survey in honor of the end of the **Millennium Development Goals in 2015** and the establishment of a new “post-2015” global development framework, the United Nations Development Program, the UN Millennium Campaign, the Overseas Development Institute, the ONE campaign, and over 700 on-the-ground grassroots organizations as well as international and local information technology companies created and continue to implement a world-wide survey seeking to collect the opinions of individuals everywhere on **what matters most to them when it comes the future.**

Survey respondents are asked to **vote on 6 out of a possible 17 policy priorities**, including a fill-in-the-blank priority that the individuals can add themselves. The survey is called My World 2015.

My World 2015, launched in December 2012, continues to collect feedback via the web, pen-and-paper ballots, and mobile phones.

About **20% of over 2 million votes** have come in via **mobile phones**. Over 70% of the mobile phone respondents live in countries that score low on the Human Development Index (versus 31% in the overall survey). More men have responded via mobile than women (at a rate of 2 male respondent for every one female), and respondents via mobile tend to prioritize better job opportunities at a slightly higher rate than the majority of respondents.

In implementation, **the mobile phone promotion and distribution of the survey** differed slightly from the pen-and-paper and web distribution of the survey. Promotion for all three of the survey distribution methods included integrated campaigns targeting specific national and regional audiences as well as ongoing global efforts to raise awareness and foster interest in the survey. As with the pen-and-paper, mobile distribution benefitted heavily from local and international partnerships and, as with the web, more immediate and centralized collection of the data was possible.

This overview introduces the My World 2015 survey and looks specifically at **how mobile phones played and continue to play a role in distributing the survey and collecting feedback from respondents**. This overview is meant for individuals who are new to the My World 2015 survey and who have a specific interest in learning about the survey as well how to use mobile technology to reach out to and engage individuals in developing countries.

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What is My World 2015?

My World 2015 is a global survey of individuals' priorities. When taking the survey, individuals can choose up to 6 out of 17 possible priorities – the 17th of which asks the individual to suggest a priority not found in the previous 16 – that are most important to the individual and his or her family.

Launched in December 2012 by The UN Development Program (UNDP), the UN Millennium Campaign, the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and the World Wide Web Foundation in collaboration with civil society organizations and influential individuals throughout the world, the **My World 2015 survey aims to collect citizen feedback on existing Millennium Development Goals**, a set of developmental goals set up by the United Nations that will reach their expiration date at the end of this year, as well as **discover and catalogue new potential goals for a development framework to be set up post-2015.**

The My World 2015 survey has been and is currently still distributed via live events and on-the-ground activities led by more than 700 grassroots organizations along with non-governmental organizations and civil society

actors, via online activities directing potential respondents to a central [website](#), and through mobile phones.

The real-time results of the survey are shared with the public as well as the United Nations High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda (HLP), the UN Secretary-General, and other leaders involved in determining the post-2015 development agenda.

What is the goal of the My World 2015 survey?

My World 2015 results, covering more than 2 million individual responses from people in over 180 countries as of June 2014, **will feed into the political process determining the post-2015 global development agenda** while also **highlighting how global citizens can** and perhaps should **be more involved** in defining government policies and priorities.

In particular, the survey intends to explore how citizens can be consulted on issues important to them and thus provide policy decision-makers with actionable and credible citizen feedback in a timely manner.

Initial approach to My World 2015 as a whole

My World 2015 attempts to harness the power of a type of 'big data' in the form of information voluntarily contributed by individuals from around the world, and add this to representative and statistically accurate traditional data from census and household surveys run by governments and their National Statistical Offices.

To make this possible, it was important to first determine what citizens would be asked as well as how the survey could be most efficiently and effectively promoted and distributed.

What are some of the tradeoffs between academically rigorous vs. 'big' data when it comes to My World 2015 results?

The **balance in big data collection is**, among other things, often **one of accuracy versus precision**. Data that is useful but is also academically rigorous is not always easy (or cost-efficient) to achieve.

Where one-off but statistically valid surveys on specific issues are often accurate, the surveys are not always cost-efficient or easily reproducible, and the results are not always repeatable. Plus these academically rigorous surveys are run, in some cases, every few years, and thus do not always provide recent (or immediately actionable) data.

For policy decision-makers interested in making data-driven and politically viable policy decisions, it can be difficult to react to what is essentially a time-sensitive snapshot of the public with regard to a set of pre-determined concerns. For example, expensive and time-consuming traditional household surveys, while an important source of socio-economic data, are not always large enough or specific enough in, say, poor or under-represented

countries, to provide policy-makers with the information they need to make pressing policy decisions – or to convince the public and important politicians and influencers about the importance of such decisions.

Alternatively, less statistically valid and methodologically accurate surveys collected through campaigns like My World 2015 are constantly being reproduced, repeated, updated, and provide immediate and actionable insight into the current concerns and priorities of a proactive (if not representative) group of citizens. This could mean the more politically salient results will be easier to convey to citizens, policy-makers, politicians, and influencers. Yet a major tradeoff with such a survey is a distinct lack of clear representative samples of the relevant populations. As of January 2013, the My World survey results as of were representative enough to be statistically valid in only 8 out of the 180+ countries surveyed.

How were the My World 2015 priorities determined?

To determine the 16 priorities of the My World 2015 Survey (plus the 17th fill-in-the-blank ‘name a priority we did not’ option), existing research, household surveys, and the Millennium Development Goals were gathered and classified into 15 thematic groups by the UN Millennium Campaign (UNMC).

In addition, a supplementary mobile survey given to more than 150 thousand young people in Uganda by UNICEF Uganda asked “What’s the most important problem u want the government to solve to make life better for you and your family. Tell us only one thing.” The 17 000 responses received (a response rate of about 9%) were classified according to the UNMC’s 15 thematic areas with a 96% match rate.

Several evaluations and consultations with experts in the field of development and the Millennium Development Goals followed, and the original 15 thematic groups became 16 categories plus the option for survey-takers to add a priority if they so choose.

To ensure that the data can be disaggregated according to gender, age, etc., respondents are asked to identify their age, gender, location, and education level after or before filling out the survey.

How is the My World 2015 survey overall promoted and distributed?

As noted earlier, those who want to take the My World survey are invited to do so via the [website](#), [SMS](#), [interactive voice response \(IVR\)](#), and [pen-and-paper](#). Each distribution option had and still has different yet complementary outreach and promotional approaches, customized per country and region as well as available networks and partners.

Examples per country can be found in the [My World 2015 blog](#). The most successful promotions included on-the-ground partners and local influencers. In Nigeria, for example, the Nigerian government mobilized youth to go out and distribute the survey. Over 700 grassroots partners in countries from Indonesia to Argentina carried pen-and-pencil versions of the survey to community events, school fairs, and more to collect in-person responses from those present. A

celebrity Tweet to the website resulted in a huge surge of young female respondents from Latin America.

Overall, in promoting the survey, **My World 2015 distributors aim to ensure that the survey is non-exclusive and as representative as possible.** For example, the survey can be filled out up to six times from the same computer – allowing for up to 6 family members that share a computer to each have a voice. However, only one person can fill out each SMS survey, to ensure that a single mobile phone owner does not fill out the survey more than once via text. Recognizing that several individuals, particularly in developing countries, sometimes share mobile phones, My World 2015 also offered a toll-free interactive voice response (IVR) number in several countries. IVR options available in many of the local languages allowed as many individuals as desired to phone in (from the same phone if necessary) and respond to the survey questions.

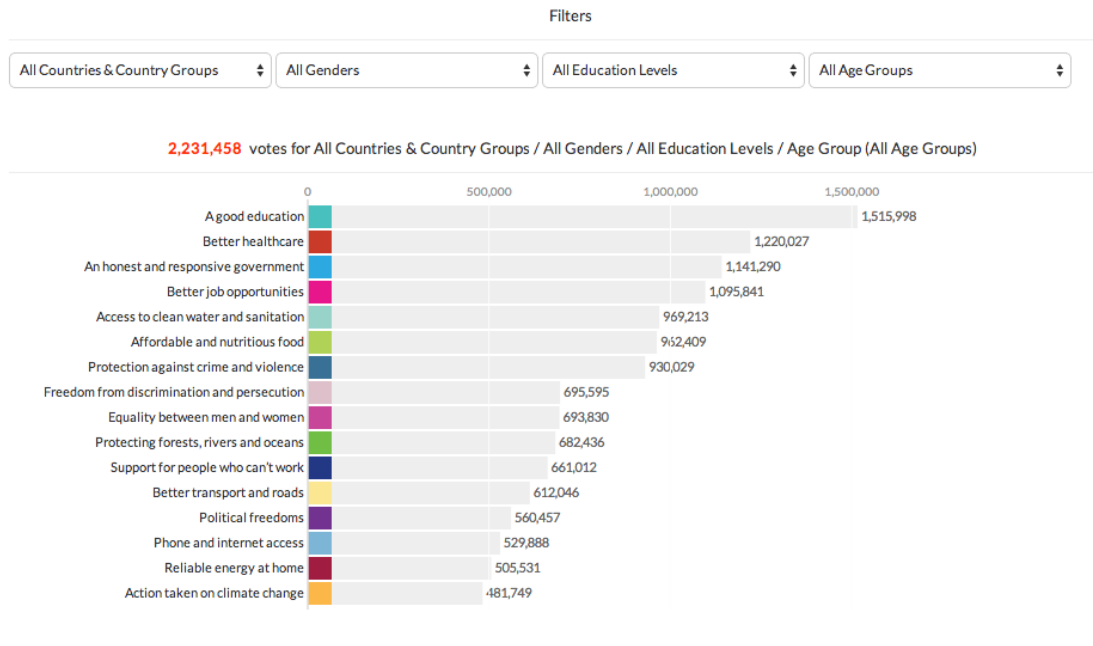
In this overview, the focus is more on the distribution of the survey via mobile in developing countries, so we will look further into the approaches used in this context. However, it's worth a read on the My World blog to learn about how the overall aims and goals of the survey along with available resources helped distributors determine the best way to get the survey out – whether high-tech, low-tech, or no-tech.

What are the results of My World 2015 so far?

Most results depend on how the data is sliced (by location, gender, education, age group, and the method by which the survey was received, etc.). However, clear overall trends so far include an emphasis on education and healthcare followed by a desire for an honest and responsive government.

Respondents with higher levels of education tend to rank protection from violence more highly overall (though still not above education and healthcare). Those from countries that score higher on the Human Development Index value action with regard to climate change more than other respondents (though again, not more than education and better healthcare). Those voting via a mobile application (biNu, covered later) put phone and Internet access among their top ten global priorities. Overall SMS respondents tend to value better job opportunities more than those responding via the web or pen-and-paper ballots.

Click the image below to visit the up-to-date data from the My World 2015 Survey.



Future plans for My World 2015

As noted, the My World 2015 survey aims to not only categorize global priorities for policy-makers at all levels, it also hopes to demonstrate that citizen consultation on policy priorities can be done in a cost-effective and timely way. The survey continues now, with new approaches to outreach under continuous iterative development. My World 2015 hopes to continue to support policy decision-making post-2015.

How are mobile phones used to distribute the My World survey?

The My World 2015 survey was distributed via SMS, interactive voice response (IVR), and through creative collaboration with biNu, [“a mobile software platform that enables almost all types of mobile phones to access Internet applications and services running in the cloud with near instant response times, even on slower or congested 2G \(GPRS / EDGE\) networks.”](#)

SMS and My World 2015

To distribute the survey via SMS, My World 2015 partnered with international and local telecommunication companies. For the majority of SMS outreach and distribution, My World 2015 worked with [GeoPoll](#), an international mobile survey group that partners with telecommunication companies throughout the world. In Yemen, where the initial goal of reaching 10 thousand respondents via mobile has exploded to yield more than 40 thousand responses, the highest

response rate via mobile in all the countries surveyed, My World 2015 worked with Y-Telecom, a local mobile service provider.

How is the survey done via SMS?

The My World 2015 survey via SMS has been done through a targeted outreach strategy that emphasizes one phone equals one respondent and which offers no financial incentive to encourage response rate. The decision to exclude financial incentives intends to ensure respondents honestly fill out the survey with a conscious desire to provide real information as opposed to achieve some monetary reward. Alternative incentives used by My World 2015 include celebrity endorsements and the concept of contributing to the community through advocating important issues.

Local partners and on-the-ground networks led promotion for the survey, many of which promoted both the offline and online versions of the survey, depending upon the context and audience.

Approach – What was the thinking behind the SMS distribution of the survey?

The My World 2015 distributors decided to ensure that **each phone receiving the survey is allowed to fill out the survey only once**, despite [research](#) as well as anecdotal evidence indicating that, in many developing countries, mobile phones are often shared among families and friends. There were two reasons for this approach: the survey aims to be representative, ensuring no one respondent fills out the survey more than once, and My World 2015 offers an IVR alternative in local languages for those without their own mobile phones in Yemen, Rwanda, and India – as many people as desired in these countries could call toll-free numbers *from the same mobile phone* and answer the voiced version of the survey (i.e. If you are a woman, please press 1, if you are a man, please press 2...)

No incentive was offered to make certain respondents fill out the survey to share information as opposed to gain a reward. GeoPoll reportedly noted that this lack of incentive would affect the overall response rate to the survey (resulting in a response rate of only 1% versus 3-5% or more if an incentive such as additional phone credit was offered).

Promotion of the SMS My World 2015 survey

Promotion of the overall survey and the options by which to take it **varied** in the countries surveyed via SMS. In **Rwanda**, My World 2015 worked with UNICEF, the [Nike Girl Hub project](#), and [Clarisse Iribagiza \(@clairyce](#) on Twitter), the young, well-known CEO of a Rwanda mobile computing technology company called [HeHe](#).

In **Yemen**, the poorest country on the Arab peninsula and home to [Ms Tawakkol Karman](#), an internationally-renowned journalist as well as a member of the U.N. High-Level Panel on the Post-2015 Agenda Report, local partners led the promotional campaign. The NGO [Y21Forum](#) distributed print ads, fliers, and radio ads (in addition to doing the recording for the IVR aspect of the survey). My World partners in Yemen also invested in billboards, additional fliers, and

three short films shown on Yemeni TV and posted to [YouTube](#). Finally, a mobile theatre displaying the videos travelled to four of Yemen's main cities in five days to promote the survey (and all the local ways in which it could be accessed: SMS, IVR, etc.) while customized media campaigns were deployed in 5 governorates: Sana'a, Aden, Hodeida, Taiz and Ibb.

Implementation of the SMS My World 2015 survey

For most countries, the My World 2015 distributors relied on GeoPoll to send out the initial SMS survey offers to respondents. In Yemen, My World 2015 distributors worked directly with Y-Telecom, a mobile distributor popular among Yemeni youth, and in Yemen, Rwanda, and India, SMS survey outreach was coupled with the offer of an IVR (voice) version of the survey, to broaden participation to include respondents who might be illiterate or fail to own a mobile phone. The IVR approach is further covered in the next section of the overview.

GeoPoll has sent out the SMS survey to 13 million people in 15 countries. By early June 2012, [over 100 thousand individuals](#) had completed the survey via SMS from 15 countries.

The **highest response rates for the GeoPoll SMS version** of the survey so far come from Ghana (43 thousand votes), the United Republic of Tanzania (36 thousand votes), and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (15 thousand votes). The lowest response rates come Paraguay (4 votes), Bangladesh (18 votes), and Colombia (28 votes via SMS). In total, GeoPoll SMS respondents cited better education, better job opportunities, and better healthcare as their top priorities.

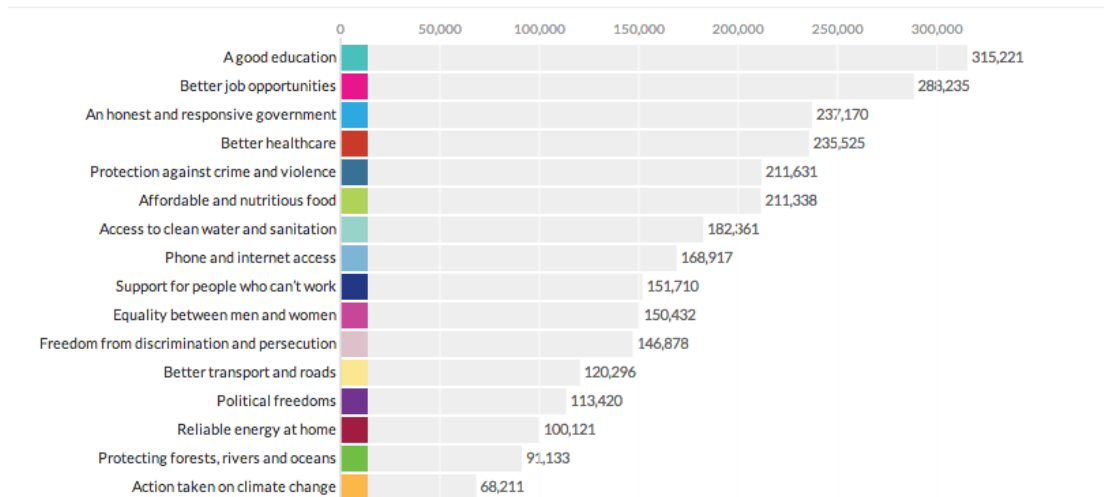
In **Yemen**, where My World 2015 partners with [Y-Telecom](#), to which over 1.5 million Yemenis subscribe, and [MenaVAS](#), a third party company that provides clients with business solutions in developing countries, along with local NGOs and the United Nations Volunteers, SMS response rate in real numbers was much higher than expected. Out of 3 million SMS invitations, sent out pro-bono by Y-Telecom, over [46 thousand individuals responded](#) and listed better job opportunities, an honest and responsive government, and a better education as their top priorities. Better healthcare came in fourth. These results are added to the 21 thousand pen-and-paper surveys gathered from Governorates across Yemen and the over 100 thousand IVR responses thus far received.

Results of the SMS My World 2015 survey

In total, over 400 thousand respondents had replied to My World 2015 by SMS in early June 2014. Overwhelmingly, men replied more than women (at a ratio of about 2:1). More than half (about 60%) of all respondents were between the ages of 16 and 30 and about 32% of all respondents claimed to have finished secondary school.

Top priorities include a better education, better job opportunities, an honest and responsive government, and better health care.

471,715 votes for All Countries & Country Groups / All Genders / All Education Levels / Age Group (All Age Groups)



Future plans for and lessons learned from the SMS My World 2015 survey

Obvious problems in the SMS survey distribution include the length of the survey, which leads to a **high dropout rate** (exact figures were not offered). Each texted question and response is followed up with another texted question and response, which, given the number of priorities respondents are asked to consider, might be tedious. Respondents generally made it through the identification questions (age, gender, etc.), but often dropped out before choosing six out of 16 priorities.

To encourage further participation, mobile phone companies like Y-Telecom continue to send reminder SMS messages to those that began the survey but then dropped out, encouraging these potential respondents to continue the survey.

Another concern is the strong gender imbalance (not unique to SMS but also found in the IVR and biNu response rates, discussed next). Aside from Kyrgyzstan and Nicaragua, there were no countries with over one thousand votes in which women were either more or equally represented than men.

The reasons as to the causes of this gender imbalance remain speculative, though a My World distributor cited the 2010 GSMA Report [Women and Mobile: A Global Opportunity](#) when stating that women across the globe are 21% less likely than a man to own a mobile phone – and this discrepancy increases to 23% less likely if the women live in Africa, 24% less likely if they live in the Middle East, and 37% less likely if they live in Southeast Asia. Reasons cited for this in the GSMA survey, and corroborated anecdotally by the My World 2015 distributor, include: handsets are too expensive (42%), mobile monthly service fees are too expensive (8%), and gender-specific issues such as the idea that there is no need for a woman to own a mobile because everyone the woman knows is local (20%), or because she has a landline (10%), or due to a woman's fear of technology or a lack of permission to own a mobile from the woman's husband or family.

Given women are less likely to own personal mobiles, it may be that the one phone/one vote approach is not ideal for reaching this target audience via SMS. However, rather than risk having the same respondent reply several times via the same mobile phone, **to address the SMS gender imbalance**, My World 2015 has increased its promotional gender targeting, using more female celebrities and gender-specific advertising to encourage more female participation.

IVR and My World 2015

Interactive voice response (IVR) versions of the My World 2015 allowed respondents to call a toll-free number and respond to automated voiced questions, usually in a local language, by pressing buttons on their mobile phones in response to automatically voiced questions.

How is the survey done via IVR?

As with the SMS and other options by which to take the survey, local partners and campaigns promoted both the survey and the local options by which to take it to potential respondents. For countries where IVR was offered, this includes promoting the toll-free number by which to take the survey in all relevant My World 2015 promotional media, from print articles to fliers and billboards to promotional SMS messages.

To set up the IVR platform in each country where it was offered, My World 2015 worked with local NGOs to record the survey in local languages. To set up the technical platform behind the IVR survey, My World 2015 and partners worked with an international company specialized in mobile technology as well as national and local mobile service providers.

Approach of the IVR My World 2015 survey

To make sure the My World 2015 survey was non-exclusive, distributors wanted to ensure that there was a survey option for illiterate individuals or individuals who did not have their own mobile phones. For this reason, My World 2015 offers an IVR option, where respondents call a toll-free number, pick their preferred language, and then respond to automated verbal questions by pressing buttons on their phone.

This survey option, when available in a specific country, was promoted in all relevant media and local outreach.

Implementation of the IVR My World 2015 survey

Working with [Kirusa](#), an “international mobile technology provider”, connected to mobile service providers in Bolivia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, and Bangladesh, as well as with local NGOs and telecom companies in different target countries, My World 2015 encourages partners and interested parties to record the survey in widely-spoken languages and distribute a toll-free number allowing respondents to call in and take the survey.

In a [‘How To’](#) document, My World 2015 explains how the IVR option works once set up:

- The user will receive an SMS message on their mobile phone introducing them to MY World through a simple message and giving them a toll-free number to call to take the survey. They may also be offered a non-financial incentive to participate.
- When an individual calls the toll-free number, an automated telephone system will allow them to choose their preferred language. They will then be asked four multiple-choice questions about the issues that are most important to them (each time selecting one from a choice of four MY World options). At each stage they will dial into the telephone keypad the number corresponding to their choice. Finally, they will be asked their gender, age and education level.
- [My World 2015] estimate[s] that a caller will need a maximum of two minutes to complete the automated survey.
- [Callers] will not incur any charges for making the call.

To record the survey in local languages, My World 2015 relied heavily on NGOs and other in-country partners. My World 2015 provided the prompt and script (usually in English), and then the partners translated, recorded, and edited the local transcripts.

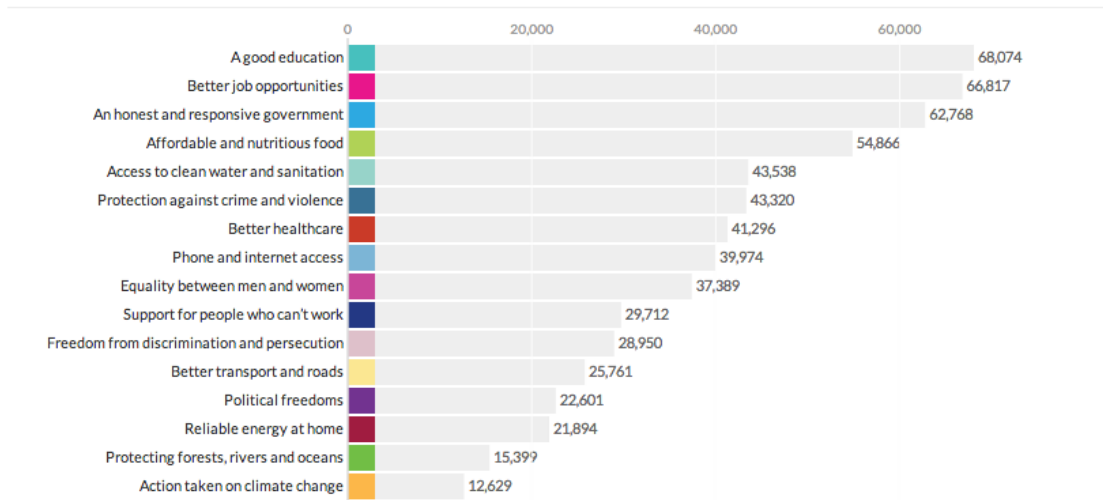
Results of the IVR My World 2015 survey

The data portal for My World 2015 does not offer a clear look at all IVR results. Instead, those interested can access the results from the on-going IVR survey in Yemen, where Y-Telecom, local UN Volunteers, and the NGO Y21Forum have heavily promoted the toll-free number. MenaVAS and a local UNV, Mr Ahmed al-Ashwal, have taken care of the technical side and reporting for the Yemeni IVR and SMS version of the survey.

As of early June 2014, over 100 thousand Yemenis responded to the survey via IVR. (Only 46 thousand have responded via SMS in Yemen.) About 31% of these respondents are female (versus 23% in the SMS version of the survey). Fifty-nine percent of all respondents are between the ages of 31 and 45 while 41% are between the ages of 16-30.

As with the Yemeni SMS version of the survey, respondents ranked a better education, better job opportunities, and an honest and responsive government as their top priorities. Better healthcare ranked 7th collectively (though it did rank 5th amongst the largest responding age group, ages 31-45).

102,498 votes for All Countries & Country Groups / All Genders / All Education Levels / Age Group (All Age Groups)



Future plans for and lessons learned from the IVR My World 2015 survey in Yemen

IVR response rate, in Yemen at least, is more equitable with regard to gender and slightly more equitable when it comes to education level. More people have chosen to respond to the survey via IVR vs. SMS, perhaps because it is easier to call in and respond to the survey via phone, generally costing the respondent only about two minutes of his or her time, instead of responding to several text messages.

IVR seems to be, based on the Yemen case study, a more effective means of engaging respondents to the My World 2015. The dropout rate appears to be lower and the overall response rate higher and slightly more equitable with regard to gender. Offering the survey via IVR is more costly with regard to time and technical set-up on the side of the distributor; however, results suggest it is time well spent.

Further analysis was not possible because the data was not disaggregated to view IVR versus SMS survey data.

biNu and My World 2015

The final approach to mobile distribution of the My World 2015 survey is a partnership with [biNu](#).

biNu is a cloud-based application that allows “almost all types of [feature – specifically Android or Java-based] mobile phones to access Internet applications and services running in the cloud with near instant response times, even on slower or congested 2G (GPRS / EDGE) networks”. biNu claims that users access [10 times less bandwidth](#) for an experience that is 10 times faster than standard mobile browsers.

biNu has had an active user base of 3-5 million during the first six months of 2014. The user base fluctuates as more and more people get smart phones or change providers.

How is the survey done via biNu?

My World 2015 partners with biNu to both distribute and promote the My World 2015 Survey. Users with accounts on biNu can find the survey in the survey section of biNu (which also offers free credit to users that fill out surveys). biNu also supports survey distribution with advertisements and reminders for account holders.

Most biNu account holders use the application to chat, share content and to access largely text-based news, sports updates, and information.

Approach of the biNu My World 2015 survey

My World 2015 noted the popularity of biNu amongst mobile users in developing countries. biNu acts as a cheap means by which to directly target the owners of inexpensive feature-phones for surveys (as little as [20 cents a question](#), according to biNu's website). Users receive credits for answering surveys, allowing them to access more features as well as more time on biNu.

The My World 2015 survey allows each biNu account holder (registered user) to fill out the survey once. However, there are some unregistered users, and it's unclear as to whether or not these users could successfully access or fill out the survey.

Implementation of the biNu My World 2015 survey

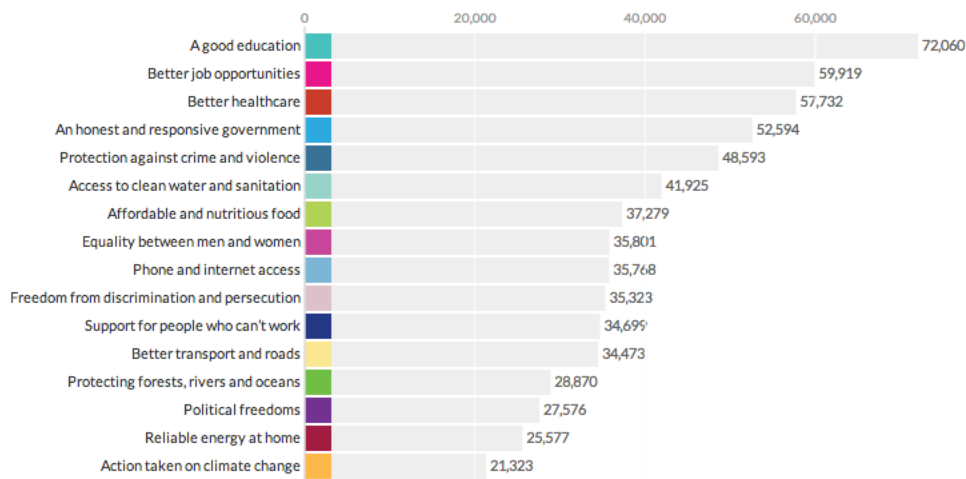
In addition to being offered as one of many surveys made available to biNu users, My World 2015 received promotional placement from biNu including Facebook ads, automated reminders sent to registered users, and some video promotion. Moreover, clickthrough rate to the My World 2015 survey via biNu increased with the added incentive of 10-20 biNu credits for completing the survey.

Results from the biNu My World 2015 survey

By early June, biNu survey distribution resulted in over 100 thousand votes from over 180 countries. About 84% of all respondents are male, and 80% of all respondents are between the ages of 16 and thirty. Over 80% are in or have finished some sort of secondary education. The largest number of votes has come from India (about 18%), perhaps due to strong promotion about the survey via high-profile Bollywood stars.

The top three priorities for biNu respondents include better education, better job opportunities and better healthcare. "An honest and responsive government" came in fourth overall.

108,252 votes for All Countries & Country Groups / All Genders / All Education Levels / Age Group (All Age Groups)



Future plans for and lessons learned from the SMS My World 2015 survey

biNu continues to distribute the survey. The largest concerns in the biNu distribution include the disproportionate amount of votes from men and a high dropout rate.

To increase female participation, My World 2015 has increased promotions targeting women, using female celebrities and offering additional biNu credit incentives to women. My World 2015 is considering targeting only women via biNu, but this has not yet been done given the survey's main goal of remaining non-exclusive.

To decrease the dropout rate, My World 2015 has asked biNu to distribute automated reminders to those that began but did not complete the survey.

Conclusion

This overview aimed to give a summary of the groundbreaking My World 2015 survey and explore how mobiles have been and are being used to promote and distribute the survey.

My World 2015 aims to survey individuals across the globe with regard to their priorities in public policy. The survey allows respondents to choose 6 out of 16 pre-selected priorities or to submit their own priority in a 17th 'fill-in-the-blank' option. Respondents have participated in the survey via pen-and-paper ballot, via a central website, and through mobile technology (SMS, IVR, and a mobile application).

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Interviews with:

Anand Kantaria, Global Project Lead at United Nations.

Claire Melamed, Head of the Growth, Poverty and Inequality Programme at Overseas Development Institute (ODI).

Frances Simpson-Allen, Partnerships Consultant - Technology and Innovation at the United Nations Millennium Campaign.